



# A Prosperous, Secure, and Well-Governed Central America Advances U.S. Interests

*“The United States views the security and prosperity of Central America as key to regional stability and to the security of the United States. We affirm our strong relationship with Central America and the region...”*

- White House Statement on the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America, June 2017

Central America is at a pivotal point in its history. Compared to the 1980s, the region is relatively free from armed conflict, politically stable, and a strong economic partner, importing over \$27 billion in U.S. goods in 2016. However, the region suffers from high rates of violence and crime with weak judicial systems to protect and prosecute those affected. Roughly half of Central America’s people live in poverty.

**The U.S. Strategy for Central America (Strategy)** is a bipartisan, multi-year U.S. government plan promoting institutional reforms and addressing developmental challenges. The Strategy aims to protect American citizens by addressing the security, governance, and economic drivers of illegal immigration and illicit trafficking, while increasing opportunities for U.S. and other businesses.

**The United States is providing approximately \$2 billion in foreign assistance** to Central American countries in fiscal years 2015-17. But we are not doing this alone. The Strategy complements the region’s Alliance for Prosperity (A4P) initiative. In 2016-2017, the governments of **El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (Northern Triangle)** committed **\$5.4 billion of their own funds** to support the A4P initiative to develop

opportunities for their people, improve public safety, enhance access to the legal system, and strengthen institutions. Outside the Northern Triangle, the Strategy supports **Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama** to address similar challenges.

To accomplish these goals, our approach addresses three overarching lines of action.

## **Promoting Prosperity**

U.S. assistance promotes economic growth, energy security, poverty reduction, workforce development, education and training, and greater regional integration that will increase jobs for Central Americans and improve opportunities for U.S. and other businesses.

- » U.S. assistance improved cargo management, reducing the average time to move goods from Guatemala to El Salvador by 70 percent from early 2016 to mid-2017, and from El Salvador to Guatemala by nearly 40 percent during the same time period.
- » In El Salvador, U.S. assistance to small-and medium-sized enterprises generated over \$153 million in sales, contributing to economic growth, and created 22,000 new jobs between 2011 and 2016.



- » U.S. support helped establish the Mexico and Central America Interconnection Commission in May 2016 to advance power market integration, which was also a key discussion topic during the June 2017 Central America Conference.

## Enhancing Security

U.S. programs combat transnational criminal organizations, stem drug trafficking, enhance citizen security, reduce gang violence, strengthen borders, and deter human smuggling and trafficking by focusing on professionalizing police and military institutions, and improving their ability to address these issues on their own.

- » U.S. support increases regional governments' capacity to stop illegal drugs from reaching the United States. Costa Rica's cocaine seizures rose 22 percent to 24 metric tons (MT) from 2015 to 2016, aided significantly by U.S. support for Costa Rica's law enforcement services. With U.S. support, Panama seized a record 56 MT of cocaine in 2016.
- » In Nicaragua, U.S. funding supports civil society activities to prevent violence. In El Salvador, as a result of government actions and U.S. support, homicides from January to June 2017 were 42 percent lower than the first six months of 2016.

## Improving Governance

U.S. assistance supports anti-corruption efforts that improve the ease of doing business, strengthen the rule of law, promote strong institutions and government accountability, reduce impunity, and improve fiscal management by promoting efficient tax collection, civil society engagement, and institutional reform.

- » U.S. support for the anti-corruption efforts of the Northern Triangle Attorneys General, the UN International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), and the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH) builds local populations' confidence in their governments' ability to fight for them.
- » The U.S. government helped disrupt 130 criminal networks from June 2015 to December 2016 by creating an investigative unit and a real-time wiretap intercept program in Costa Rica.
- » U.S. technical assistance reduced the time it takes Belizean courts to respond to requests for court files in appeals cases from three weeks to two days in 2016.

*"A secure and prosperous Central America contributes to a safer, more prosperous United States and Western Hemisphere. The United States recognizes the region as an important area in our foreign policy agenda..."*

-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson,  
Remarks at the Conference for Prosperity and Security in Central America, June 2017

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